

Christianity and Postmodernism Part 2

By Dr. J.P. Moreland

J.P. Moreland:

--Quite a bit about more extreme forms of postmodernism. And secondly, I would like to offer a critique of these more extreme forms of postmodernism. Before I do that, I have a little bit of housecleaning I need to correct. Last week, I made a mistake in naming, uh, someone and I got the wrong name. I referred to a professor that I have heard give a talk on who claimed that we were trapped behind our beliefs. And I made the point last time that this professor I think what-or what I believe I said, that he had left seven years ago. And then I said his name is Dan Kalitz. That was a mistake. Dan Kalitz teaches here. Uh, he is-he's a professor at the university. I got a call from the Dan asking--

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

[Unintelligible] get said? Right. And so the professor's name was Dan Cornell. And Dr. Cornell had uh left about seven years ago. And I think he's now teaching on the east coast. The second thing I want to remind you of is that I think that there are some uh some insights to be gained from postmodernism. For example, the idea that we often distort the world by our biases, or the idea that we do use language to gain power over other people, or uh the idea that human reason alone, unaided with uh with God's help is going to solve all of our problems, this was supposedly enlightenment idea. Uh it's good for postmodernist to point these things out. I still, however, remain profoundly dissatisfied with postmodernism. And my claim last time was that for every legitimate insight postmodernists give us, I can't think of a single one that requires

postmodernism for the insight. Or, to put it differently, I think you could glean the very same insights by reading medieval thinkers, or someone back in among the ancient Greeks, or people in the biblical history. I don't think that postmodernism is at all necessary for these insights. And I think on balance, it is a destructive view.

Now, I do want to say it's a worthy object of study. We have professors here at the university that study, and try to gain insights, and try to learn what the culture is saying. And I think all of that's good. But I'm here now to offer what I take to be a critique of postmodernism in its more extreme forms, because I find postmodernism not only to be false, but terribly destructive of human life and human flourishing. Now, you remember last time I said that modernism was basically committed to this—to these ideas: that there is a real world that is independent of our language and thinking. Reality, I said, is what you bump up against when your beliefs are false. And according to the modernists, there is an external, real world out there. Secondly, truth is a correspondence between my beliefs or thoughts and what they are about. So according to a correspondence theory of truth, truth is when things are the way I take them to be, and falsehood is when things are not the way I take them to be.

Third language can be used to refer to reality. Thus, I can use the word "dog" or "justice" to refer to things that are real. There are such things as dogs. There is such a thing as justice.

Furthermore, rationality is objective and is cross-cultural. There are in principle uh-uh-a a criteria for rationality, or at least there is such a thing as rationality, that is—that is true for all people at all times and all cultures. And remember, I distinguish between psychological objectivity, which means the absence of bias, versus epistemological objectivity, which is the

offering of, in principle, good, persuasive grounds for a conclusion. And I claim that just because I'm psychologically biased, it doesn't follow that I can't offer in principle good grounds for believing a conclusion. If I couldn't, then no one could ever teach anything he believes. He would have to advocate things he didn't believe, because he could be accused of using arguments that only got their force because he was biased. Moreover, no one could ever change their mind on anything because they thought the evidence was good for the new position. And we do that all the time. We do that all the time.

I went on and said the final thing about postmodernism was the idea of--modernism--was the idea theory from Descartes that standing between me and the external world is a set of ideas, or sense impressions, such that I never get the tables and chairs, or lions, and tigers, and bears, oh, my. But instead, the only thing I'm ever aware of is my sense image of a table, or a chair, or a lion on the back of my retina, let's say. This means that there is a wall between me and the external world and I can't ever see if my ideas about the way things are are accurate because I can't get outside of my ideas to reality to compare my ideas with it. Now, what does postmodernism hold as a philosophical set of ideas? Basically, postmodernism is the opposite of everything I told you. Postmodernists, at least in their more extreme forms, deny that there is any such thing as reality. According to postmodernism. Reality is a social construction. Now it's hard to know what that's supposed to mean. Some postmodernists. I've actually read claim that the "I" is a s-construct of language. A culture uses the first-person pronoun I, and if you use the first-person pronoun I in a certain way you construct people. This-this obviously begs off for an answer to the question, what is it that's using the pronoun I.

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

Really the truth of the matter is, the only reason the English word "I" refers to selves, is because selves have arbitrarily used the following noise, "I," to refer to selves. We could have chosen any noise. We could have used the sound "whoop!" to refer to the stuff we wanted to.

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

So the truth is that the referential force of the word I as a self [unintelligible] divisive language presupposes selves. Therefore, it cannot be that which constructs them. But never mind that for now. I'm-I'm not ready to critique. We're still stating the view. Reality is a social construct. How do we get clear on what this means? Uh, well, maybe the best way to get clear on it would be to say, suppose you believe that there were no such things as colors in the world. The other thing is, when a tree falls in the forest, is there a sound? The correct answer to the question is yes, there is. But supposing you don't believe there are sounds or colors in the external world. Suppose you think that the world is just a bunch of atoms that vibrate. Alright? So then if when God looks at the world, He sees subatomic particles that are vibrating in motion, but He doesn't see any color. You with me now? Then the world you experience is a world filled with things that are colored. Does that make sense? So it should be obvious that the world that is the object of your experience is not the way you experience it. And the color of my tie is not a feature of the tie, it is a construction of your act of consciousness directed on the tie.

So in the general sense now, just as the color is a construction of your act of seeing this, just throw the tie in as well. And we say that-that reality is ultimately a social construction. This

leads to a vicious, infinite regress, of course, because social construction, you can tell, must be real in order to construct other things. Social constructing has to be real. But then social constructing, I think, would have to be a construction of reality. And then you get a second order social constructing. And that social constructing itself would be a construction of a third order social constructing. And things get real long quickly on this kind of thing. And this is a vicious infinite regress. According to uh postmodernists, language creates reality, and a linguistic text cannot refer to reality. You cannot use language to refer to reality. The only thing a text can refer to is another text. So the only thing we can talk about is talk. We can only talk about our talk. When you study a text, a text cannot be used to talk about what's real. When you come to a text, the only thing a text can be allowed to do is to make reference to other texts, or to somehow be related to other texts.

Now, postmodernists practice, uh, what is called the hermeneutics of suspicion. And what that means is that when they come to a text, they deny that it has an intended meaning by an author, or they say there is an authorial intention, but nobody can know what it is, so we can set it aside. Now, what do we do with a text? We raise suspicion, for the text in that we are always looking for the underlying power dynamics in the culture that created the text. We want to look at what kind of power dynamics are going on in the culture that created this text. Is this an oppressive anti-feminist text? Does this text oppress minorities of various sorts? What we look for is the-it's the oppressive power moves that lie beneath the surface of the text. When you--the activity of interpreting a text is more important than the text itself. Indeed, the quote meaning of a text actually resides in the act of interpreting it. So the meaning of a text resides in me, not in the text.

Right? Now, this means that the professor is all powerful, because it is the professor's subjective musings that turn out to be where the action takes place.

Get serious about this, before I'm through this morning, what we're going to see is, in my view, postmodernism is an attempt by a disenfranchised, alienated, intellectual elite to gain power over the traditions that control people's lives so that they can have a right to say what is and isn't acceptable. How do you do that? You disenbig-you disembowel the literary text that constitute our traditions and you place the power of those texts in those who interpret them. And the interpreter subjectively muses about a text, as he walks around the podium in the lectern. And it is the professor's subjective musings about the texts, his utterances, the reports of his [unintelligible] feelings of dynamics as he interacts with the scribblings, or whatever we want to call them, the scratchings on a sheet of paper, that become the essential thing. As [unintelligible] once put it, "When a postmodernist grades papers, what she's actually doing is grading herself."

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

That would be an interesting thing. Well, in any case, postmodernists also reject dichotomous thinking. One postmodernist said, "People who divide the world into either or's are living in a modern period." What kind of either or's? Either true or false, either real or unreal, either reasonable or unreasonable. Either right or wrong. Either good or bad. Either meaningful or not meaningful. Okay? And so postmodernists reject this kind of modernist dichotomous thinking. Instead, we should approach subjects from various points of view, and all points of views have a right to be heard, and they're equal on the playing field. There is no such thing as objective

reason, or objective value. What's reasonable and valuable for one cultural community may not be reasonable and valuable to another uh culture or community. Another way of putting this is to say that there are no such things as metanarratives. So now that raises the question, what is a metanarrative? Well, maybe the place to start would be to ask what's a narrative?

That's a nice question, and it's not clear what a narrative is. But let's just say, a narrative is an individual or community story by which it rehearses, in narrative fashion, its commitments. A narrative is an individual or community story by which it rehearses its ultimate commitments. So in a community story, it tells by way of dialogue and narrative, it expresses its commitments to what's real, now not what's really real. It expresses its commitment to what's real in its story, and what's valuable in its story, and what's true in its story, and what's rational in its story. So now we've got the Christian narrative. The Christian narrative rehearses a commitment to a God that exists to the Christian community. And it permits-it makes its commitment "not thou shalt not commit adultery in the Christian community," and that it's reasonable to believe the Bible in the Christian-- . But, of course, there are other narratives. There's a feminist narrative, and so on.

Now, to say there's no metanarrative is to say two things. First, it's to say there's no story that's true for everybody. Second, it's to say there are no criteria that could be used to adjudicate among competing stories. There's no way to tell one story is more reasonable than another. Now, what will happen if we give up on the idea that in principle there's no way to say that Christianity is more reasonable than Buddhism, or atheism, or Marxism, or what have you. What-what will we do? Ladies and gentlemen, we will stop using arguments for our views, and we will engage in social and political manipulation. An illustration. I have a friend that's doing a Ph.D. in

communications at an Eastern--at a university on the east coast. This particular individual is studying under one of the leading feminist lesbians in the country. She is a lesbian phil-uh a communications professor who is a-who is an espoused feminist and a lesbian.

One day in class, she showed a film in a Ph.D. seminar that showed lesbian sex taking place on film. After the-after the fifteen minutes of this went on, she asked my friend, let's call him Joe. She said--she knew Joe was an evangelical. She went up to Joe and said, "Joe, I wonder how does this film make you feel?" And Joe, who is a pretty articulate Christian and, by the way, who's very compassionate, about-for alternative lifestyles, he has demonstrated a tremendous love for homosexuals who struggle with their [unintelligible] And he said, he said, "Well, it makes me very sad at many levels, because I, first of all, I want to reach out and try to help those who are struggling with these kinds of things. And I-my heart breaks for them because I know they're missing out on what God has intended them to be." He said, "I think I have to say though, at the end of the day, that homosexuality in all its forms is a form of dysfunctioning." And I think that's self-evident. I think he's smart enough to say this.

He says, "I think it's it's evident to most people that this is not the way we were designed to function. And I think it's also a violation of God's law. So I think on two grounds, it's with-it's a-it's a bad lifestyle. It's it's self-evident that that's not the way we're made, and it's a violation of the laws of God." Now he gave some points and arguments. The professor knew that she was going to do this before the class and she [unintelligible] a lesbian student in the class to be prepared after she'd asked the student what his views were. Instead of responding to Joe with an argument, she turned to this other student and said, "Sally, how does Joe's remark strike you?"

Sally, who had been prepared for this before class, said, "You know, Dr. so and so, I have to tell you, when I came back from Christmas vacation, my lover was here waiting for me at the airport with flowers. She gave them to me and gave me a hug and a kiss at the airport, took me home, treated me to a candlelight dinner, and we spent the evening just catching up on how Christmas vacation had been, and gazing lovingly into one another's eyes."

And she said, "You know what hurts me? Is that there are still people around who would deny me the privilege of being loved. And it's so sad that people still feel this way, that they have to prove-they have to deny others the chance to have love relationships [unintelligible]. I feel real sad for you." Now, you will not find an argument in there about homosexuality. Do you understand what I'm saying to you. What people find is-is rhetoric. And now we find a White House that engages in rhetoric writ large. And this is the ultimate result of postmodernism. It is the dumbing down of the thinking ability of the American people so that they make decisions based upon how they feel about a presentation instead of analyzing the content for what's being said. Because of postmodernism is, how do I-what did I say? Correct? I mean, I can-I can't use that word. If postmodernism becomes embraced, the role of argument then loses its force, because at the end of the day, there's no such thing as objective reason. Now, what do I say by way of critique?

I've als-I've already begun to initiate some ideas about postmodernism. I'd like to offer some critiques. And then I want to give fin-uh, the final word of warning. First of all, postmodernism is simply self-refuting. If something is self-refuting, that means it makes itself false. The statement "There are no English sentences longer than three words" is self-refuting. The

statement itself makes the utterance false. The proposition "I can't speak a word of English" is itself a false utterance. The statement is a false statement. The statement "There are no truths" is a false statement. Now postmodernism engages in a number, in a whole host, of self-refuting propositions. The statement "There are no truths" is either true or false. If it's false, it's false. If it's true on the postmodernist view, it's got to be false because there are no truths. So either way, it's false. So postmodernism is a self-refuting claim that presents itself as true. The claim that literary texts have no meaning is itself self-refuting. It becomes pointless to give a lecture, you understand that, it becomes pointless to write a text.

E.D. Hirsch in Virginia ta-talks about going to a conference of people who are followers of Heidegger that were postmodern in their orientation. And during the conference, Hirsch and others began to say some things that Heidegger was claiming in his writings that were pretty absurd. The number of Heideggerian defenders got up and said, "Yes, but I think you've misunderstood Heidegger." And heard-to which Hirsch replied, "How can someone misunderstand someone if there's no such thing as an intended meaning in the text?"

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

Why is my interpretation not every bit as good as yours? I have postmodernists come up to me at the University Miami of Ohio. And uh-uh give me a postmodernist spiel. And I looked at her in the eye, and I said, "You know what offends me about you? Is I-I believe-I believe that God created animals to be respected, and you torture your dog. And I tell you the fact that you would

take your dog outside and give it electric shocks, make this--I find to be--you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Well, she looked at me like I was crazy.

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

And she said "I--," she had, "I have no idea what you're talking about." And I said, "You just-you just said that--," And I said, "I know that's what you meant, because I know that the underlying power [unintelligible]--"

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

"--your utterance was a mask for your own outward social behavior."

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

And then I--and then I said, and I said, "Not," I said, "I don't mean to be uncharitable. What I'm-- the obvious thing that I'm doing is I'm trying to keep--I'm trying to surface an issue. The issue is you don't want your statements to be deconstructed by other people because you will protest by making the claim, 'I'm being misunderstood.' And if you think you can be misunderstood, you must be assuming A, that you've got an intended meaning in your utterance, and B, your interpretation of your own meaning prompts everybody else's, because you have the right to do what interpretation [unintelligible] of your rhetoric. So I'm suggesting that we extend that same graciousness to all guests." Now, here's the point about postmodernism being self-refuting, it's

very important. When something is self-refuting, it doesn't just happen to be false so it might be true, it is necessarily false. That means it's false in every possible world. Self-refuting propositions are not possibly such that they're true. Now there are some falsehoods, like Napoleon, uh, oh, Bob Dole was the president of the United States. That's false. But it could have been true. You with me on that?

The proposition "There are no truths" or that-or "no utterance, no propositions have meaning," is not only false, it's false in every possible world. It's not possible that it be true. What does that assure us of? The fact that self-refuting statements are necessarily false tells us two things. Number one, no amount of discoveries in the next 20 years about linguistic texts is going to cause us to revise our views that postmodernism is false. No further research in the future, no amount of increased sophistication in literary theory, is going to overturn the claim that the postmodernist's assertions are false, because these are contingently false, [unintelligible]. Postmodernism is necessarily false. It's like the statement two plus two is 98. No amount of mathematical research is going to show us that two plus two is 98. No amount of literary research in the future is going to overturn the falsehood of a self-refuted utterance.

Secondly, we have hope that in the university what we're about is gaining truth. And we should use our reason to gain the truth and to argue civilly for competing views about what the truth is. To put it differently, we don't have to involve ourselves in postmodernist skepticism about the possibility of human faculties and their ability to gain the truth. Ah for one thing, I have no idea why Christians would be so pessimistic about the mind and our faculties. After all, the devil didn't make our mind and our sense of-our sense of [unintelligible], God did. To be sure, we're

fallen. But our fallenness does not distort the fact that God is a God who has given us our faculties and placed us in a world to go and to interact with. And I find the postmodernists read far too cynical and skeptical about the appropriateness of our faculties. And the postmodernists himself or herself doesn't apply the same cynicism and skepticism to himself or to his favorite object. You'll-you'll notice that the hermeneutics of suspicion is always applied to conservative texts, to texts of Western literature. It's almost never applied to liberal, left-leaning, secular.

I don't see anybody deconstructing uh in any kind of systematic kind of way, as people on the political left let's say. It turns out to be conservatives that are being deconstructed. So postmodernism is self-refuting. Secondly, postmodernists are confused about the nature of objectivity. I've already argued this. They confuse epistemological objectivity with psychological objectivity, and they claim that we can't have epistemological objectivity if you can't have psychological objectivity. But that just isn't true. One can be biased or committed to a position and still give objectively good reasons for why he or she thinks the position is true. And one can also be persuaded to change his mind by way of what he takes to be objectively good reasons for another position. So from the fact that we are psychologically biased, which, by the way, we're not always even psychologic [unintelligible], with no-with no idea what at all about where to go.

I remember studying the uh, issue of the uh, of the nation at a local church, and whether the church employed Biola [unintelligible], I had no clue. I had no bias at all. And that's why I picked that example, because I don't think that's an unimportant question. I can remember studying the question of-of uh, a suicide, and I didn't really have a very clear idea of-of the nuances of the morality of suicide. There were certain intuitions I had about it, but I wasn't clear

about what I thought about the number of cases. And I came to be persuaded by a set of arguments that certain views on this, on suicide, are true. Now, maybe I'm wrong, but he can't just say I'm wrong because I'm biased. Now, you've got to give me arguments to show why my arguments aren't good. If I'm not willing to listen to you, I failed to participate, and you can safely ignore me now. But in principle, we present arguments against, we don't--the arguers but we present argument. We be charitable, but we defend what we believe, we're open to counter arguments, and we try-and we try to present why we believe what we believe.

And if we don't have-we can't be epistemologically objective, why should we go to university? And that leads to my third-uh to another problem of postmodernism. Well, I want to kind of lay that down, postmodernism is wrong about consciousness. Postmodernism has a misunderstanding of the structure of consciousness. Remember Descartes' view of consciousness? According to Descartes, the ego should be likened to a bucket, and the ego contains its sense images as kind of like grains of sand in the bucket. You with me on this? Now stick-stick the "I" inside the bucket, surrounded by the sand. On that view, the "I" can't get outside the sand to see what's outside the bucket. That means that according to Descartes' model of the ego on this view now, the-that-the self is trapped behind, or contained inside, its own self and can't get outside to the external world by way of its thoughts and its experiences. You understand, when I have a sense experience for Descartes, I'm not experiencing the object in the world, I'm experiencing my own sensation and that's it.

Now the postmodernist puts language in the place of sensations for Descartes. And it says, we're trapped behind our language and we can never get to the external world. All we can do is

readjust our own kind of thoughts, and our own experiences, our language, but we can't get to the world. Ladies and gentlemen, to have a sense experience is already to be out in the world. It's not something you've got to get out to. Consciousness and its states are already of the world. When I have a thought of London, my thought is not a thought about my thought of London, it is about London. And I know the difference between thinking about London and thinking about my thought of London. I would never pay money to fly to my thought of London.

[Audience laughs]

J.P. Moreland:

My thought of London might be pleasurable. It might last 10 seconds. It might be very vivid to me, but it's not the same thing as London. I used to tell Ashley and Alison when they were little kids, the thought of a dog doesn't need dog biscuits. Dogs do. And the thought of a dog isn't the same thing as a dog the thought is of. Now, when I have a thought of a dog, what's the thought about? It's about a dog. It's already in the world. I don't have-I'm not [unintelligible] on anything. Or to say it differently, when I have a sense experience of Doug-Dr. Gottard's blue shirt, my sensation is already of the shirt. Now you and I experience all throughout our lives cases, listen carefully, we experience cases where we correct our own thoughts and experiences by comparing them with the appropriate object. We do that all the time. Example, I have a-I hear from the wife from the bookstore that a book is in the library--

[Chair squeaking loudly]

J.P. Moreland:

I form a vague impression of what the book looks like because I've seen copies of it before. So I've got an idea of what the book is like. Guess what, I can go to the bookstore and I can compare not my bookstore impression of the book with my earlier impression, I can compare the book with my earlier impression. Because when I'm in the bookstore and I'm looking at the book, I'm not comparing my looking at the book with my thinking of the book earlier, I'm comparing the book with my earlier thinking the other. Why? Because my experience in the bookstore presents me with the book. So there is an example of where I can actually compare the object in the world with my thought or my-my musings about it. And we do this with regard to God. I remember one experience where I thought I had a certain view of God's holiness.

[Audio cuts out and then becomes clearer]

J.P. Moreland:

Once God showed up when I was praying on my knees at the University of Colorado when I was a Christian, after three years. I was kneeling on this little bed, and God showed up in the room, and I was confronted with the object itself. And my awareness of His holiness revised my earlier conceptions of it. And I came to see that His Holiness was different than the way I had conceived it to be. I was able to compare my thought about God, with God Himself as He showed up to me in religious experience. You do the same thing with scripture, for example. Unfortunately, ladies and gentlemen, at the end of the day, what I'm afraid of is that postmodernism ends up reducing authority to power. It ends up reducing authority to power. Now, why does this bother me?

Because authority is the right to be heard and to command compliance, and authority is the power to make people do what I say. And what I'm concerned of is that if postmodernism gets

spread very widely in our culture, we will end up reducing debate and issues to nothing but what Nietzsche said, namely the ability to impose my will on other people.

Make no mistake about it. At the end of the day, the only thing postmodernism leaves you is with the raw exp-imposure of your will on other people. Because in principle, truth and reason no longer are independent of power, they are themselves expressions of the will to power. Along these lines, Murray Rothbard has made the following statement about postmodernism, "The real purpose of the postmodernist power brokers is to separate many mer-Americans as possible from their families, from their literature, and from their traditions. If we cannot know the meaning of any text, then we can't know the meaning of the Bible, including the Ten Commandments. Nor can we know the meaning of the United States Constitution, nor any other text that might sustain social order or provide meaning and direction to life. Once students become alienated from their families and their religion, their values and their traditions, they will be like lambs prepared for the slaughter. And when that day comes, who do you suppose all the people with empty heads and empty chests," says Rothbard, "will look to for their orders?"

"They will look to their deconstructionist power-seeking university professors who introduced them to the mysteries of a world without meaning. The real name for postmodernism is not meaning or truth, it is power. Raw, political power." Ladies and gentlemen, never forget that in the 60s there was a rejection on the part of the liberal 60s agenda outside the Jesus movement of a transcendent order of value and of persons, gone. And that is why many 60s radicals went into journalism and into to the professorate and into the political arena. Because these became a surrogate religion for those who had lost their belief in the transcendent. And it became obvious

in short order that the primary purpose of the post-modernist authorities in the universities was to therapeutically work out their own alienation against God in the traditions of Western culture, and to end up justifying their own aberrant lifestyles, and to come to terms with their own disenfranchisement from our traditions.

I say in short, that while postmodernism may have certain um mildly interesting insights, which, as I've said before, can be gained without having to go to postmodernism to gain it. The more extreme forms of postmodernism, at the end of the day, not only must be found, weighed in the balance, and found wanting because it's self-refuting and it's incoherent. It must be judged as malevolent and hideous, because the kind of agenda that is behind the postmodernist movement, whether individual members of that movement know it or not, that kind of agenda is ultimately going to result in the reduction of truth, and reason, and value to social consensus. And he who dies with the most toys wins. Might makes right. What does that mean for a Christian university? No faculty members should be hired that accepts postmodernism in its most extreme forms. You cannot be a Christian and believe that there is no such thing as truth, that there's no such thing as reason, and there's no such thing as objective value.

Could a professor teach post-investigate postmodernism at a Christian university and accept certain tenets of postmodernism? Yes, postmodernism is a worthy object of intellectual investigation. And as I've already said, there are certain themes that postmodernists have advanced that I think are important and insightful. You understand what I'm saying? But why would a Christian professor who understands postmodernism ever want to use postmodernism in order to justify these insights? I leave you with this example. Suppose that I believe that Naziism

actually had some very important insights about the nature of the state. Suppose that I thought that the Nazis had a pretty good view about the importance of, let's say, political authority. Now, suppose you were to ask me, "What is your view of Nazism?" I suppose I said, "Well, I'm not an extreme Nazi, I'm sort of a mild Nazi. I sort of hold to sort of a mild version of Nazi tenets because I think the Nazis have given us important insights about the nature of the state."

Now, that may actually be true. But the fear is that that kind of way of expressing it could turn out to promote to people who don't know any different, an acceptance of the whole nine yards. Wouldn't it be much easier to say, "You know what? I don't find Nazism to be at all interesting, though I think some of the ideas that they accidentally landed on are-decent ideas. And I justify those ideas in a different way." At the end of the day, then, what I'm saying is that while there may be some value in a watered down version of postmodernism, because of the unbelievable danger of postmodernism and because of where our culture is already at in its view of truth, and reason, and value, I don't know why any evangelical institution would want to risk fanning the flames of this already rolling, and with inertia, social movement that will gobble up, gobble up human dignity if it's allowed to keep its inertia. Those of us who are Christians need to be very cautious in claiming that postmodernists had insights that we should appropriate as Christians.

Even if that's true, I think it's the job of the Christian intellectual to try to show that there are other ways to justify those insights without having to step into a paradigm, which at the end of the day, if encouraged, could lead naïve people that the Book of Proverbs calls fools, those are people-or the simpletons, rather, these are naive people, into the destruction of their own souls.

Let's pray. Our Father, we thank You, that when we come to You, we do not come to You in a vacuum. You've actually had people around for more than 100 years, there have been people who've loved Jesus Christ for more than--since the 1960s. Uh, following You was not an invention of Emmanuel Kant or of Rene Descartes. Your followers have been around for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. And we thank You that the great thinkers that have populated Your body for centuries have given an awful lot of attention to themes that are being talked about in postmodernism.

And what that tells us is, when we come to think about postmodernism, we stand on the shoulders of the giants of Your people for hundreds and hundreds of years who have in their own way, repeatedly and repeatedly warned us of the dangers of this kind of system of thought. The problem is, dear Lord, Your people don't know their own history, and they believe that what is now novel is actually novel, instead of being just a rehash of bad arguments that have been rejected by great leaders in Your people centuries ago. Help us to have insight and wisdom in these trying days, for our good and Your glory, we ask it. Amen. Thank you, and you are dismissed.

[Silence]

[Music begins and then fades out]